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ABSTRACT

This study investigates whether other relationships in sentence structure besides the "brother-in-law" relation sanction surrogate agreement in Zinacanteco Tzotzil (Mayan). Surrogate agreement refers to cases in which an element that lies outside the class of regular agreement controllers in a language (the surrogate) controls subject-verb agreement instead of the nominal whose final grammatical relation would normally entitle it to control agreement. In Zinacanteco Tzotzil, agreement is regularly controlled only by final subjects and by final direct objects. However, in three constructions, agreement is controlled by an element that is neither a direct object nor a subject. In these cases, the controller of the agreement can be characterized as a nominal that hosts the ascension of a nominal that is a final direct object or final subject. Therefore, while the controller itself is not a regular agreement controller, it is always connected to a regular agreement controller. Tzotzil agreement rules are explained in detail, and the different forms of surrogate agreement (possessor ascension and conjunct union) are discussed as they relate to Tzotzil agreement. It is concluded that both the host relation and the brother-in-law relation can sanction surrogate agreement. (DJD)

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Surrogate Agreement in Tzotzil

by

Judith L. Aissen

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SURROGATE AGREEMENT IN TZOTZIL*

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1. Introduction It is well-known that agreement in English existential sentences poses an analytical problem:

(1) There is/*are a unicorn in the garden.

Contrary to general principles of English syntax, a unicorn controls agreement in (1) even though it is not the final subject of the verb. Under one analysis of existential sentences, a unicorn in (1) is the initial subject of the verb, and is displaced by the insertion of the dummy nominal there. An early insight of relational grammar, which assumed such an analysis, was that a unicorn in (1) controls agreement by virtue of its relation to a nominal which is the final subject, namely, there. The relation between a dummy and the nominal displaced (put in chomage) by the entry of the dummy was termed the brother-in-law relation, allowing an informal statement of English agreement like this: the verb agrees with the final subject of its clause unless the final subject has a brother-in-law, in which case agreement is with that brother-in-law.

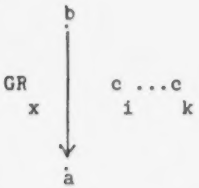
I use the term surrogate agreement to refer to cases like that illustrated by (1) where an element which lies outside the class of regular agreement controllers in a language (the surrogate) controls agreement instead of a nominal whose final grammatical relation would normally entitle it to control agreement. I believe that this is possible only when some relation, like the brother-in-law relation, holds between the surrogate and the nominal it stands in for, as it were.

The question arises then whether other relations besides the brother-in-law relation sanction surrogate agreement. Data from Zinacanteco Tzotzil (Mayan) suggest that there is at least one other which does. In Tzotzil, agreement is regularly controlled only by final subjects and final direct objects. However, in three constructions, agreement is controlled by an element which is neither. In these cases, the controller can be characterized as a nominal which hosts the ascension of a nominal which is final subject or direct object. Hence, while the controller itself is not a regular agreement controller, it is always connected to a regular agreement controller.

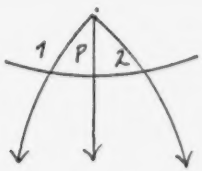
I assume the usual conception of the structure of a sentence as a set of arcs, where each arc (see 2a) represents the fact that one element, a bears a grammatical relation, GR_K, to an element b at some level or levels, $c_i \ldots c_K$. (See Perlmutter and Postal 1983a). a is the head of the arc in (2a), b is its tail. Sentence structure is represented by stratal diagrams which provide compact representations by presenting strata as horizontal rows,

as in (2b), a partial representation of Sandy visited Chicago:

2)a.



b.



Sally visited Chicago

2. Tzotzil Agreement Tzotzil is a predicate-initial, subject-final language. Pronouns are generally omitted in surface structure. The predicate must agree in person with the final subject and the final direct object. Person agreement is illustrated in (3)-(4):[1]

(3) Ch-i-bat.
asp-1Abs-go
'I'm going.'
(4) L-i-s-maj.
asp-1Abs-3Erg-hit
'She struck me.'

The verb in (3) is intransitive, and bears one agreement affix, glossed "1Abs" for first person absolutive. The verb in (4) is transitive and bears two agreement affixes, glossed "1Abs" and "3Erg". The one glossed "1Abs" cross-references the final direct object, which is first person. The other cross-references the final subject, which is third person. No overt affix cross-references third person absolutives. Hence, any intransitive predicate which bears no overt absolutive affix has a third person subject; likewise, any transitive predicate lacking an overt absolutive affix has a third person direct object.

The predicate may optionally mark the plurality of the final subject and direct object by means of a set of suffixes:

(5)	Ergative	Absolutive
1 pl inclusive	-tik	-otik
1 pl exclusive	-tikotik	-otikotik
2,3 plural	-ik	

As this chart indicates, there are five plural suffixes, four of which cross-reference various first person plurals. The fifth, -ik, cross-references all non-first person plurals. Number agreement is illustrated by (6)-(7):

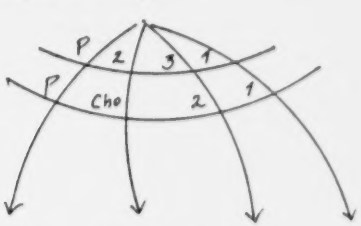
(6) Ch-i-bat-otikotik.
asp-1Abs-go-1AbsExcl
'We (exclusive) are going.'
(7) L-i-s-maj-ik.
asp-1Abs-3Erg-hit-pl
'They hit me.'

In both cases (and generally), the plural suffix cooccurs with a prefix which marks the person of the cross-referenced nominal.

As noted above, both person and number agreement are generally controlled only by final subjects and final direct objects, a fact demonstrated by sentences which involve Indirect Object Advancement (IOA).

Indirect objects obligatorily advance to direct object in Tzotzil (see Aissen 1983), putting the earlier direct object in chomage. The advancement is registered on the verb by the suffix -be, which is glossed in the examples below by "be". (8) involves IOA; (9) represents its structure:

(8) Ch-a-k-ak'-be kremotik.
asp-2Abs-1Erg-give-be boys
'I'll give you the boys.'
(9)



chakak'be kremotik 'you' 'I'

As final direct object, the second person pronoun determines absolutive agreement. Crucial here is that if the plural suffix -ik is added to the verb in (8), the second person is necessarily interpreted as plural:

(10) Ch-a-k-ak'-be-ik kremotik.
-pl
'I'll give you (pl) the boys.'

I interpret this fact to mean that the plural suffix can only cross-reference the final direct object, and that, in particular, it cannot cross-reference the final chomeur. This conclusion is further supported by the fact that a (surface) sentence consisting of no more than the verb chakak'beik 'I'll give it/her/him/them to you (plural)' forces a plural interpretation for the second person pronoun, and is entirely indifferent to the plurality of the argument denoting the thing given.

(11) shows the same thing: -ik cannot cross-reference the plurality of the final chomeur, li koxetike.

(11) Ch-a-j-pok -be-ik li koxetike.
asp-2Abs-1Erg-wash-be-pl the children
'I'll wash the kids for you (pl)/*(sg).'

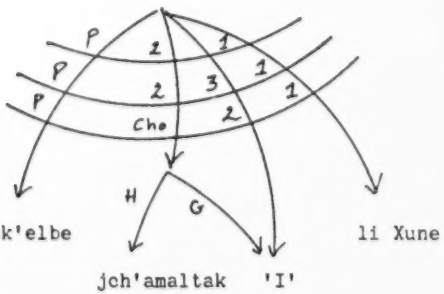
Person agreement and number agreement are distinct rules with distinct properties. For one thing, person agreement is obligatory, while number agreement is optional. For another, while person agreement is always controlled by a nominal which is either a final subject or a final direct object. there are several constructions in which number agreement is controlled by a nominal which is neither. One is the Possessor Ascension construction; the other two are variants of Conjunct Union.

3. Surrogate Agreement

3.1. Possessor Ascension Possessor Ascension is relevant only in clauses in which the direct object is possessed. Under certain conditions, discussed in Aissen (1979,1982), the possessor of the direct object ascends out of its nominal constituent and becomes clausal indirect object. As indirect object, it advances to direct object with all the expected morphological and syntactic consequences: the verb is suffixed with -be, and the final direct object (= possessor of the initial stratum direct object) controls absolutive person agreement. (12) exemplifies this construction, and (13) represents its structure. A possessed noun agrees in person (and optionally in number) with its possessor by means of the same set of affixes which cross-reference transitive subjects on verbs. I gloss these "Erg" also. "H" represents the relation borne by the head noun to its nominal constituent, "G" the relation borne by the possessor.[2]

(12) L-i-s-k'el-be j-ch'amaltak li Xune.
asp-1Abs-3Erg-watch-be 1Erg-children the John.
'John watched my children.'

(13)



The first person pronoun bears no grammatical relation at all to the clause in the initial stratum. It ascends to indirect object in the second, and advances to direct object in the third and final stratum.

Of interest here is the fact that the verb in (12) can be

suffixed with -ik even though neither the final subject nor the final direct object is plural:

(14) L-i-s-k'el-be-ik j-ch'amaltak li Xune.
asp-1Abs-3Erg-watch-be-pl 1Erg-children the John.
'John watched my children.'

(14) has the structure in (13). Since neither the final subject nor direct object is plural, -ik must cross-reference the final chomeur, jch'amaltak. Further corroboration for this comes from the fact that if the singular noun jch'amal 'my child' replaces the plural jch'amaltak, the interpretation of the sentence is unchanged: the suffix -ik requires that the final chomeur be interpreted as plural.

The crucial contrast then is between (10) and (11) on the one hand, and (14) on the other. In the former, the final chomeur cannot control number agreement, while in the latter it can. The obvious conclusion is that in (14) the nominal which is final chomeur is in a privileged position with respect to agreement because of its connection to a nominal which is a final direct object (the first person pronoun in the case of (14)). In (14), the nominal which is final chomeur is the constituent out of which the first person pronoun ascends, the constituent which is said to "host"[3] the ascension.[4] The condition on agreement controllers in Tzotzil can be stated (informally) as follows:

(15) Person Agreement: A nominal a controls person agreement on the predicate of a clause c iff a is a final subject or final direct object in c.
(16) Number Agreement: If a nominal a controls number agreement on the predicate of a clause c, then a is either the final subject or final direct object in c, or a hosts the ascension of a nominal which is the final subject or final direct object in c.

3.2. Conjunct Union Principles (15) and (16) are further supported by constructions involving Conjunct Union. (17) exemplifies this construction: the verb is plural, but the final subject is singular.

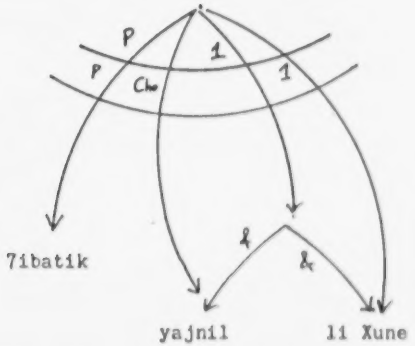
(17) 7i-bat-ik xchi7uk yajnil li Xune.
asp-go-pl with his-wife the John
'John went with his wife.'

The final subject in (17) is li Xune. The phrase xchi7uk yajnil is something like a prepositional phrase, understood as comitative. The plural suffix -ik seems to mark the cardinality of the set of goers, a set of which John and his wife are members.

My claim about the structure of (17), sketched in (18) below, is that the initial subject is the coordinate nominal corresponding to 'John and his wife', that one of the conjuncts, here li Xune, ascends out of that coordinate nominal and replaces it as subject. The other conjunct, the one corresponding to 'his wife',

obviously cannot remain a conjunct, and it also ascends, taking on the chomeur relation in the clause. "&" represents the Conjunct relation.[5]

(18)



Conjunct Union, then, refers to structures in which an earlier coordinate structure is dissolved, with the original conjuncts assuming grammatical relations in the clause. One assumes the grammatical relation of the host (as stipulated by the Relational Succession Law (Perlmutter and Postal 1983b), while all others become chomeurs.[6] In Tzotzil, the chomeur in this construction is flagged with xchi7uk.[7]

As far as the agreement is concerned, the verb agrees in number with the coordinate nominal, i.e. the initial subject. Although this nominal is not a final subject or direct object, and in fact bears no grammatical relation in the final stratum at all, it hosts the ascension of a nominal which is. Hence, it satisfies (16).[8] [9]

3.2.1. Surface Non-constituency The analysis represented by (18) makes two claims about sentences like (17). One is that they contain an initial stratum coordination. The other is that the members of that coordination do not make up a surface constituent. At issue then is the constituency of the string xchi7uk yajnil li Xune in (17). That it is not a surface constituent is quite clear. If it were, it would be either a coordinate structure or a head-modifier structure with xchi7uk yajnil 'with his wife' modifying li Xune. It cannot be a coordinate structure because although xchi7uk can function as a conjunction in Tzotzil, when it does, it occurs between the conjuncts it connects. Neither can xchi7uk yajnil li Xune be a head-modifier structure because phrasal modifiers always follow the head in Tzotzil. Finally, if it were a constituent, it should topicalize. But it cannot, as indicated in (19). (7a, a topic marker, and li, a form of the definite article usually present topics.)

(19) *(7a) (li) xchi7uk yajnil li Xune, 7ibatik.
('Juan went with his wife.')

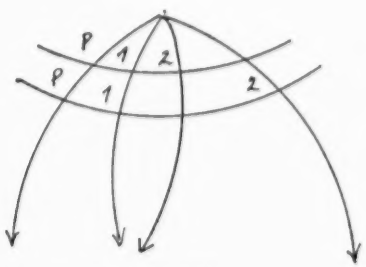
On the other hand, if the final subject in (17) is li Xune, with xchi7uk yajnil a final chomeur, then (17) has the expected order, since the subject occurs last in the clause.

3.2.2. Reciprocal Conjunct Union The claim that the elements corresponding to 'John' and 'his wife' in (17) do make up a constituent in the initial stratum is supported by clauses involving Conjunct Union and containing a reciprocal nominal. Some of the properties of the reciprocal nominal are exemplified by (20):

(20) 7i-s-nup s-ba-ik li 7antzetike.
asp-3Erg-meet 3Erg-self-pl the women
'The women met each other.'

The reciprocal nominal sbaik is final direct object in (20). It consists of the noun stem -ba which is obligatorily possessed by a pronoun of the same person and number as the final subject.[10] Like other pronominal possessors, it does not occur in surface structure. I assume, however, that sbaik is not the initial direct object in (20), but rather that li antzetike 'the women' is both initial subject and direct object. The reciprocal nominal enters in some subsequent stratum and replaces the direct object ((21) ignores the internal structure of the reciprocal nominal):

(21)



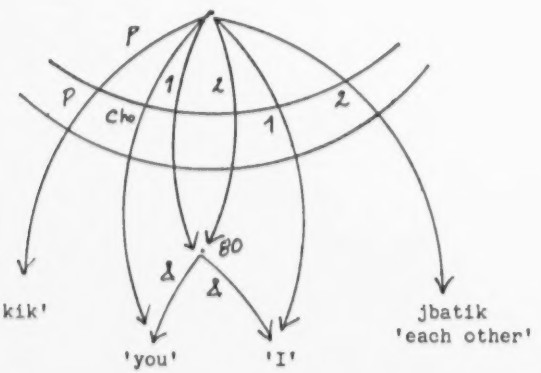
In fact, I assume that a necessary condition for the entry of the reciprocal nominal in some stratum is the existence of a nominal which heads two arcs in an earlier stratum in the clause. The reciprocal nominal replaces this nominal in one of the two relations, leaving the nominal in the other to serve as its antecedent.

Armed with this, consider now (22), which involves Conjunct Union and contains the reciprocal nominal:[11]

(22) K-ik' j-ba-tik xchi7uk vo7ote.
1Erg-marry 1Erg-self-1Inc with you
'You and I will marry each other.'

The antecedent for the reciprocal must be the coordination corresponding to 'you and I'. However, there is no surface constituent corresponding to the antecedent. The part corresponding to 'I' has been dropped as pronouns usually are; the part corresponding to 'you' surfaces with the flag xchi7uk. These properties of (22) follow if (22) involves Conjunct Union. I analyze (22) then as:

(23)



The nominal represented by 80 heads both a subject arc and a direct object arc in the initial stratum, satisfying the conditions for the entry of the reciprocal nominal. Independently, the conjunct corresponding to 'I' ascends and assumes the grammatical relation of its host, while the other conjunct ascends as chomeur.[12]

I conclude that there is evidence for both claims of the Conjunct Union analysis: clauses involving Conjunct Union contain a nominal which is an initial coordination but not a final coordination. This in turn, supports the earlier formulation of Number Agreement in (16). The problematic agreement in sentences like (17) follows directly from (16) given the Conjunct Union analysis.[13]

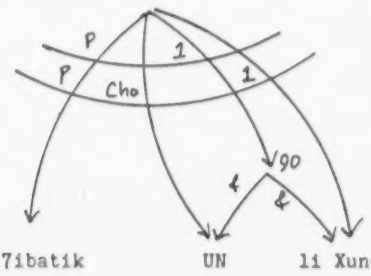
3.3. Indefinite Conjuncts There is one final case in which the predicate agrees in number with an element which is neither final subject nor final direct object. In (24), the subject is singular, but the verb cross-references a plural subject. Both the subject and direct object in (25) are singular, but the verb cross-references the direct object as plural:

(24) 7i-bat-ik li Xune.
asp-go-pl the John
'John left (with someone).'
(25) 7i-k-il-ik ta ch'ivit li tottik Xune.
asp-1Erg-see-pl at market the Mr. John
'I saw Mr. John at the market (with someone).'

As the translations indicate, both sentences entail that John was in the company of someone else. The set of goers ((24)) has more than one member, as does the set of those seen at the market ((25)).

My proposal is that sentences like these involve Conjunct Union, but that one of the conjuncts is indefinite and does not occur in surface structure. This indefinite nominal, represented here as UN, might be identified with the initial subject in agentless passives or the initial subject in Spanish sentences like 'se vive bien aquí' (roughly, 'one lives well here'). (26) is the structure of (24):

(26)



The coordinate nominal, 90, hosts the ascension of the final subject. As such, 90 may, by 16, control plural agreement.[14]

4. Conclusion In Tzotzil, a nominal which hosts the ascension of a nominal which is final subject or direct object may control agreement in place of that nominal, even though the host itself is not a final subject or direct object, and in fact may bear no final grammatical relation at all (as in the case of Conjunct Union). The host relation and the brother-in-law relation are two then which sanction surrogate agreement. This conclusion points clearly to two further questions: what other relations sanction surrogate agreement? And, more generally, what characterizes the class of such relations?

FOOTNOTES

* This research was supported by Faculty Research funds, and by the Syntax Research Center, at the University of California, Santa Cruz. This paper incorporates suggestions of Geoffrey K. Pullum and William Ladusaw. It is likely that neither would have analyzed the data as I have. An earlier version of the paper was presented in May 1983 at the Buffalo Conference on Grammatical Relations.

[1] The facts presented here are based on my own fieldwork on the Tzotzil of Zinacantan, Chiapas, and the claims of this paper are limited to that dialect of Tzotzil. j=[h], ʔ=ʔ, and x=[š]. Among the glosses are: asp=aspect, cl=clitic, pl=plural, and pts=particles. Glosses which are not self-evident are explained in the text.

[2] The nominal which ascends in this construction may surface either as possessor in its nominal constituent, or as clausal direct object (see Aissen 1979 for discussion). When pronominal, however, it generally does not occur in surface structure in either function.

[3] The notion 'host' can be defined straightforwardly in arc pair grammar, a development of relational grammar. See Johnson and Postal (1980:134).

[4] Another example like (14) is:

(i) 7a li Xune 7i-k-il-be-ik li s-kremotike.
topic Juan asp-1Erg-see-be-pl the 3Erg-sons
'I saw John's sons.'

[5] In this construction, the nominals which ascend must surface as clausal dependents. In the terminology of arc pair grammar, the conjunct arcs are erased, erasures which follow from principles of arc pair grammar. The arc headed by the coordinate nominal is apparently also erased. This is not predicted by current APG laws, but might be attributed to the fact that all its "branches" are "assasinated" (see Johnson and Postal (1980) for definitions).

[6] As formulated in Perlmutter and Postal (1983a), the Chomeur Law does not sanction the chomeur relation in (18). However, a revision of the Chomeur Law to allow for this case can be motivated by the following reasoning: the chomeur relation exists to obviate violations of the Stratal Uniqueness Law. If, in Conjunct Union, all conjuncts ascended and assumed the grammatical relation of the host, violations of Stratal Uniqueness would be inevitable. Hence, one conjunct assumes the relation of the host, while all others assume the chomeur relation. Gibson and Raposo (1983) motivate a revision of the Chomeur Law to allow for cases not currently covered by the Chomeur Law by much the same reasoning.

[7] It appears that that conjunct which is highest on the person hierarchy (1st-2nd-3rd) replaces its host (i.e. assumes its grammatical relation. See, for example, (22) below).

[8] The plural suffix can be omitted in (17). This is expected for two reasons. For one thing, number agreement is optional. For another, presumably number agreement is possible with the final subject in sentences involving Conjunct Union. When this subject is singular, as in (17), the structure will sanction no plural suffix.

[9] (i), from Laughlin (1980:101), exemplifies the same construction as (17):

(i) Tax-nupun-ik xa 7ox xchi7uk smalal ti tzeb 7une.
asp-marry-pl cl cl with her-husband the girl pts
'The girl had nearly married her [future] husband.'

The verb in (i) is intransitive and cross-references a plural third person nominal even though the final subject, ti tzeb, is singular. Under the analysis proposed here, agreement is with the initial subject, the coordinate nominal corresponding to 'the girl and her husband'. One conjunct, ti tzeb, ascends as subject, while the other, smalal, ascends as chomeur and is flagged with xchi7uk.

(ii) is like (i) and (17), but the coordinate nominal corresponding to 'you and your wife' is the initial direct object:

(ii) Ch-a-j-k'opon-ik xchi7uk avajnil li vo7ote.
asp-2Abs-1Erg-speak-pl with your-wife the you
'I'll talk to you and your wife.'

One conjunct, here the second person pronoun, ascends as direct object, assuming the grammatical relation of its host. The other, avajnil, 'your wife' ascends as chomeur and is flagged with xchi7uk. The verb agrees in person with the final subject and direct object, but it agrees in number with the initial direct object, the nominal which hosts the ascension of the final direct object.

[10] The reciprocal nominal is third person since all possessed nominals are. That it is third person is clear from the verb inflection. The absence of an overt absolutive affix means that the verb has a third person direct object.

[11] This is a textual example from Laughlin (1980:147).

[12] The verb in (22) does not and cannot agree with the earlier coordinate nominal. However, for reasons not clear to me, the verb in reciprocal clauses never bears a plural suffix.

[13] Hale (1975), brought to my attention by Geoffrey Pullum, discusses strikingly similar facts from Navajo and proposes a

transformational analogue of Conjunct Union.

[14] Cf. this example from the Talitsk dialect of Russian, taken from Corbett (1983):

(i) M'it'ixa dral'is'. (pl).
'Mitixa had a fight.'

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